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AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN NORTH KOREA

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AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN NORTH KOREA

Following is the translation of an article entitled "Agrarnyye preobrazovaniya v KNDR" (English version above) by I. Kazakevich in Sovremennyy Vostok (The East of Today), No 11, Moscow, November 1960, pages 12-13 & 30.7

The successful cooperativization of agriculture in the Korean People's Democratic Republic is one more affirmation of the correctness and practicality of V. I. Lenin's plan and the international significance of the experience in collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union. Based on the Lenin cooperative plan, which is a basic element of the plan for building a socialist society, and creatively applying the experience of the USSR, the Korean Labor Party was able to attract the masses of formerly down-trodden, half-starved peasants to socialist construction in a comparatively short time and make them builders of the new, socialist Korea with full and equal rights. The victory of the Korean people in the area of socialist reforms, under conditions of a continued split in the country, has not only an important domestic, but also an international significance.

In this article the basic steps in the process of cooperativization will be considered. The road to collectivization was laid by the democratic agrarian reform of 1946 in North Korea. It wiped out the landlord system, Japanese-owned land, shackling rents and served as an impetus for productive forces.

Carrying out the democratic agrarian reform together with state aid caused a considerable increase in agricultural production in the KNDR. In comparison with 1946, by 1949 grain production had increased by 40%, cotton by 407%, raw silk -- by 196%, draught cattle (oxen) -- by 67%, and hogs -- by 200%.

The war of 1950-1953 caused great losses to agricul-

ture. Villages and irrigation systems were almost totally destroyed over a huge area. Land under cultivation was reduced by 180,000 chonbo (one chonbo equals 0.99 hectare), grain yield dropped 10-15%, and almost 50% of all domestic and draught animals perished. Deliveries of chemical fertilizers, agricultural implements, and consumer goods to agriculture declined. The number of poor peasants almost doubled. The first manifestations of socialism, in the form of many temporary and variegated unifications on the part of the peasants, appeared in agriculture in the KNDR during the war period. The growth of state farms continued. Before the war there were 37 of them, and in 1953 the number rose to 213. The number of machinery renting stations grew from 5 to 15, and the number of tractors (calculated at 15 hp) from 150 to 500. The peasants were conscious of the fact that without close ties with each other and without joining all their forces, it would be impossible to revive the agriculture which had been ripped apart by the war.

The Korean Labor Party embarked upon a program of broad propaganda for the Lenin cooperative plan under conditions of a growing understanding on the part of the peasants of the role of collective labor. They showed the peasants the advantage of changing over from tiny, independent economic units to collective producers' associations with concrete examples. The Labor Party attracted the Korean peasantry to socialist construction by means of first developing the simplest forms of cooperation in the field of marketing, supply, and credit with a subsequent change-over to producers' cooperatives. In February, 1953, the decision was made for an initially gradual organization of agricultural producers' artels, which later played an enormous positive role in the propaganda for mass cooperativization.

In July 1953 there were already 174 agricultural cooperatives (72 agricultural producers' artels and 102 agricultural cooperatives) in the KNDR, uniting 2400 peasant households. The VI Plenum of the Central Committee of the KLP, which took place in August 1953, placed before the people the task of putting the republic's agriculture on the rails of socialist development and joining the separate economic units into large agricultural artels.

After the VI Plenum of the KLP, various associations, basically consisting of poor peasants, rapidly began to form. In the directives on organizing the agricultural cooperatives, which were made in January 1954, the Central Committee of the KLP recommended the form of cooperative to be chosen pursuant to the wishes of the peasants them-

selves and depending on concrete conditions. In addition, the directives indicated that it was possible and necessary to form associations of the higher types [see note] and on a comparatively large scale from the very beginning.

([Note] The forms of cooperatives were determined in dependence of the amount of collectivized implements and means of production, labor and income distribution).

The Central Committee of the KLP, taking into account the experience of collectivization in the USSR, carefully worked out the problems connected with managing the cooperatives, evaluating work-day units, labor discipline, conducting social economy, distributing incomes, and increasing agricultural production. Between July 1953 and March 1954 (the so-called experimental period of cooperativization), the number of agricultural cooperatives (second and third forms) rose from 174 to 1,091. They included almost two percent of all peasant households and occupied 1.7% of all arable land in the country.

The experimental period in the struggle for the collectivization of agriculture brilliantly affirmed the correctness of the policy of the KLP and allowed it to gather a wealth of experience in management of cooperatives. In spite of a series of errors (the cooperatives did not develop as multi-branch economic units, and the principle of voluntariness was violated as well as that of equal distribution of income, etc.), the young associations demonstrated the advantages of a cooperative economy over private economy.

The mass cooperativization of agriculture in the KNDR began after the November Plenum of the Central Committee of the KLP in 1954. The Plenum surveyed the results and decided to undertake mass cooperativization of the country's agriculture. By the end of December, 1954, the number of cooperatives rose to 10,098, and the number of cooperativized households comprised 31.8% of the total. This meant that the middle peasant had gone into the collective.

The Labor Party and the government of the KNDR carried out a series of measures for strengthening the material-technical base of agriculture and considerably increased deliveries of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and agricultural implements to the village. Well-trained party and administrative personnel were sent to the cooperatives. The cooperatives were strengthened by demobilized soldiers and former high school students. Realizing the shortage of draught cattle in the cooperatives, the state arranged to sell them cattle on a large scale and at reduced prices.

The state cut taxes on partially-irrigated land and

on land which had to be cleared. However, the cooperative members' totals meetings at the end of 1955 showed that the yield average in some cooperatives had been lower than that of individual farmers. There were cooperatives which gave 10 kilograms of grain per work-day unit, and there were some which gave only 1.5 kilograms. In some cooperatives the peasants received 200 von per work-day unit, and there were some where the peasants received no money at all. The totals showed that about 30% of the cooperatives could be considered the best ones, about 50% -- middle ones, and 20% -- comparatively backward ones. In its December 1955 resolution "On Measures for Fighting Shortcomings Cropping up in the Course of Fulfilling the Decisions of the November Plenum of the CC of the KLP on the Rapid Rise and Development of Agriculture", the Plenum of the CC of the KLP gave a deep Marxist analysis to the first year of mass cooperativization of agriculture. The Plenum, noting the great success of cooperativization, formulated the struggle for the further development and organizational-economic strengthening of those cooperatives already created, as a basic task. The Plenum brought up the question of the further improvement of party and state leadership and aid to cooperatives. It recommended not setting up high norms for the accumulation fund, and increasing the work-day unit distribution in its place. In conclusion, the Plenum resolved to observe the principle of voluntary cooperativization more strictly in the future.

During 1955-1956 the number of agricultural cooperatives increased from 12,132 to 15,825, and 80.9% of all peasant households had been cooperativized. In individual provinces, Pkhenan-Namdo, for example, cooperativization was virtually completed. By the end of 1956, out of the total number of 15,825 cooperatives, 15,429 were cooperatives of the higher (third) form. Already in 1956 the peasants showed the tendency to form large collective economic units, and small cooperatives (from 10 to 30 households) began to form into larger ones.

This brought grain production up to 2,870,000 tons in 1956, which was 8% higher than in 1949, a pre-war year. The pre-war level was passed to a considerable extent in potatoes, vegetables, sweet potatoes, tobacco and other agricultural products, as well as hogs, cattle, horses, sheep and goats. As a result of these achievements, the grain problem was basically solved in 1956.

The average grain yield in cooperatives was higher than on individual farms by 19%. Cash income was 11,730 von. The standard of living of the members of the cooperatives had been raised. In 1956 each average household re-

ceived 1,616 kilograms of grain, 357 kilograms of potatoes and sweet potatoes and 9,542 won in cash.

The tempo of cooperativization remained high. By the end of 1957 there were 10,032 cooperatives, 95.6% of all households were in cooperatives, and cooperative land comprised 93.7% of the total. This meant that cooperativization had largely been completed in the KNDR. It had won a great historical victory in the socialist transformation of agriculture. The successes of 1956-1957 furthered the strengthening of the popular democratic system in the KNDR and raised the standard of living of the entire country to a considerable degree.

1 Laboring to fulfill the tasks laid forth in April 1956 by the III Congress of the Labor Party, of the necessity of completing agricultural cooperativization during the first Five-year Plan (1957-1961), the Korean Communists have directed all their power on those regions where the level of cooperativization has remained low. Great work has been done toward attracting peasants into the cooperatives, in re-educating the petty tradesmen and businessmen who are connected with the marketing of agricultural products. As for the kulak, the Labor Party has pursued the policy of limitation and attraction into the cooperatives on the principle of equality with the other peasants. This combination of educational work and suppression of openly hostile kulak elements has led to the liquidation of the kulaks as a class. The cooperativization of agriculture in the KNDR was completed in August 1958.

Solving the food problem was the greatest part of the socialist transformation of agriculture in the KNDR. Technical crops, animal husbandry, orchards and the silk industry are developing at a great pace. The poor peasant has disappeared in the Korean village in the past four years.

A great cultural development has begun in the village. In October and November 1958, growth of cooperatives was successfully conducted in the KNDR. This size increase followed the goal of creating the conditions for the wide application of modern agrotechnology in the country's agriculture. As a result, the number of agricultural cooperatives is not 10,000 as it was formerly, but 4,000. The number of households per cooperative has increased from 80 to 300, and the arable land has increased from 130 chonbo to 500. The campaign for increasing the size of the cooperatives was conducted on the principle of one cooperative for one li (rural administrative unit which includes several villages), at which the chairman of the people's committee of the li would become at the same time the chairman

of the cooperative. Consumer cooperatives and credit cooperatives, as well as schools, cultural and medical institutions came under the administration of the larger cooperative.

Increasing the size of the cooperatives to that of a li and transferring to it the functions of state and economic-cultural administration led to the liquidation of private land and dwellings, turning it, together with the other means of production, into the people's socialist property. The victory of socialism in agriculture in the KNDR allows us to pose the question of technical revolution in the village and a grain harvest increase in the next few years to seven million tons, cotton -- to 200,000 tons, cocoons -- to 60-70,000 tons, fruit -- to 250,000 tons, and meat -- to 400,000 tons.

The culmination of the cooperative movement in agriculture and the mighty growth of agricultural production in the KNDR signals a new victory of Leninist ideas, the victory of socialist production relations to the Korean village, and signify that the formerly backward agriculture of the country, based on large private ownership of land, shackling rents and farming technique of the middle ages, has taken a firm stand for socialist development. The land reform and the cooperative movement are a serious school for the political and economic re-education of the formerly down-trodden, illiterate, and indigent Korean peasant into a conscious builder of the new, socialist Korea, endowed with equal rights. The success of the cooperative movement in Korea testifies to the fact that a new peasantry has arisen, imbued with socialist ideology. The cooperativization of agriculture in North Korea has eliminated the inevitable transitory period of contradiction between large-scale socialist industry on the one hand, and small-peasant agricultural economy on the other.

The success of the cooperative movement affirms the correctness of the policy of the Korean Labor Party in the field of agriculture. It speaks of the great concern of the party for an increase in the material and cultural level of the peasantry as well as of the entire Korean people. In conclusion, it demonstrates that under the dictatorship of the proletariat, cooperativization is the only route to the victory of socialism for all countries having a more or less numerous petty and middle producer class.